10: Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Negritos

Sri Gupta, in conclusion, has been tempted to emphasise with firm conviction that the Andamanese are, therefore, very probably a remnant of the dwellers on the marshes of Bengal and the uplands of Santhal Paragana or the dense forests of Burma and Malaya. 174

As regards the native appellations and phonetic similarity, such apparent similarity is possibly evidenced in many groups separated from each other by long distances. Similarly, the diet of raw meat and fish is and was common to all hunting and collecting tribes of the world. Independent evolution of many tribes has been akin to each other and therefore, the further geological studies and studies in anthropology can only confirm the idea.

Since the arrival of the Andamanese in the islands, a gradual separation has taken place among the different branches of population who had moved to different parts of the islands. The micro-environment has exerted considerable influence in moulding these people ultimately giving birth to a number of sub-groups. However, the broad generalisations are their hunting and collecting economy, complete ignorance about the domestication of the plants and the animals, except the Onges who have learnt only for the last 30 years the domestication of dogs. Family is the smallest social unit and a few families constitute the communal hut. Each tribal sub-group has its hunting territory, within which it maintains a more or less nomadic life till they return to the main settlement where they have a communal hut. 105 174 [592] [423]

The doctrine of the environmental determinism exemplifies itself in the adaptation of the aborigines to the local environment. In their life, they never look beyond their local geography and the materials for houses, the food, the ornaments and every thing that they are in need of, are collected from the small territory in which a community lives. So the obvious conclusion may be drawn that the coastal tribes are dependent on fishing, turtle hunting and gathering of shells and oysters and the interior tribes on hunting. This type of primitive economy, based on hunting and collecting, cannot support more than two to four persons per square mile as against more than 300 per square mile in agricultural lands and again the density varies to a great extent according to the type of agriculture practised e.g., rice-growing regions support the maximum density of population. In spite of their all-round self-sufficiency they have some connections with the later settlers. For the want of iron, tobacoo, distilled liquor, opium etc., these aborigines (jarawas) either make periodic raids on the settlements (Onges and Andamanese) or have established friendly relations with the settlers. The necessity 105 105 177 439

10: Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Negritos

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of all these things, locally not available, was felt by the aborigines only due to their slight contact with the later settlers.

However, a broad two-fold division of the aboriginal population can be made.

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1. Aborigines of the Great Andaman Group — All the aborigines of the Great Andamans with the exception of the Jarawas, the most hostile aborigines living in the southwestern part of the Andamans.

2. Aborigines of the Little Andaman Group — the Onges of the Little Andaman, the Jarawas of the South Andaman & the Sentinelese of the North Sentinel island.

As to how these two groups came into being and their areas of distribution, various theories have been put forward. Long after the attainment of the individual traits of these two groups, a continuous northward movement of the aborigines from the Little Andaman was in vogue and one such party had arrived in the Great Andamans who have been lately known as the Jarawas, who were all along subjected to pressure of the local natives belonging to the Great Andaman Group, the *Aka bea* of South Andaman. The very development of the hostility of the Jarawas and their complete seclusion from the other aboriginal groups owe to their being continuously subjected to the adversities. B. V. Eickstedt[1] has been of the opinion that the aborigines of the Andamans entered into the Great Andamans in two groups—the earlier group comprises the Onge, Jarawas and the Sentinelese while to the later group belong the ancestors of the Great Andaman Group. The passage of the Great Andaman Group has led to a constant southward push of the earlier group which has ultimately led to their habitation in the islands of the south i.e., the Little Andaman, Rutland Island and a part of the South Andaman. Cipriani has been emphatic enough in justifying the views of Brown that the Jarawas reached the Great Andamans from the south. Though they are supposed to have come from the Great Andamans by canoes, the art of constructing canoes and of using them have been completely forgotten and Cipriani believes that such instances of the loss of knowledge of the construction of canoes and their uses are many. A list of the names of the camps, given by Cipriani in the 1951 census, dating back to antiquity and having a good supply of drinking water and of

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1 Eickstedt, B. V — Die Negrito der Andaman (Autho Ans).

10: Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Negritos

105 177 182 For the fact that the Andamanese inhabits the coastal areas of the Andamans, the fishing is an well-known art to them. The pristine culture is virtually lost and the few who are still now surviving have been brought under the folds of government help. Still now the headmen of the Andamanese in the Middle Andaman, *Loka* is found doing turtle hunting in their canoes and climbing up the coconut trees without the help of any rope. Still now they are found dancing in groups but they are few and far between. All of them wear clothes and live in the huts made by the Forest Department.

THE ABORIGINES OF THE LITTLE ANDAMAN GROUP.

101 The Onges, the Jarawas and the Sentinelese belong to this group.

The Jarawas

177 648 101 181 Of all these three groups, the Jarawas only live in the Great Andamans and their occurrence in the Great Andamans has been explained by many authorities, as has been explained earlier. The Jarawas are implacably hostile and the best of efforts to bring them under terms of amity have proved furtile. Lt. Colebrook and Archibald Blair first came in contact with the Jarawas and in course of time, the Aka-beas, belonging to the Great Andaman Group, living in the South Andaman became friendly with the foreigners while the hostility of the Jarawas remained unabated. The Jarawa hostility has been always increasing and it was more so since 1921. In 1923, 37 Jarawas were shot and in 1938, a Jarawa woman and her 4 children were captured. So the chances of meeting the Jarawas have been few and far between and the great decline in their number has in all practical senses stopped the apprehension of their raids in the new settlement areas. Still now, of course a person penetrating deep into the forests of the eastern parts of South Andaman should always be on the guard against an attack from the Jarawas.

The Onges.

The Onges, having experienced the impact of the foreigners at the latest period, are at present the most widesprend of all the aborigines of the Andamans. They do not have the truculence of the Jarawas and the attempts for bringing them under closer ties and terms of amity with the foreigners have proved successful, though the essential traits of their social, cultural and material life remain unaltered.

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

and particularly of Oceania, but not with that of the Indian peninsula – a fact which is highly significant in any reconstructive study of the migration of flora and fauna to the archipelago.

The most recent phase in the spread of vegetation within the Andamans is less than a hundred years old; it began on Great Andaman, but none of the species has yet reached Little Andaman. The coconut has reached it during the last few years, but when I was there, there were not more than five wild palms in the whole island. The original coconuts must have floated from Great Andaman, or even the Nicobars. The Onges at once realized that they were edible, and called them *marele*. Now, however, there is a plantation of over five hundred trees to the north of Labanar, which I established by degrees on a number of occasions as a gift to the Onges.

The absence of any cultivated plants on Little Andaman led me to try pawpaws and bananas, as well as coconuts. In 1952 the Governor himself suggested a plant whose leaves are said to cure ringworm, so widespread among the Onges. The Onges, however, were not remotely interested, nor were they any more interested in the pawpaws and bananas. The pawpaws were left to lie on the ground and groves of young plants sprang up, far too close together, crowding the original tree and not sturdy enough to fruit. It was useless to show the Onges what to do. The bananas would have grown well, but their leaves were ripped to pieces by the storms. Possibly they would fare better in Great Andaman, where the hills would afford some shelter from the wind.

A rather different result, but equally unfortunate, followed the importation of grass seed into Great Andaman to improve grazing. The seed, imported from Europe, must have been contaminated with *Mimosa pudica*, which has spread widely, as it did in India and the rest of southern Asia, and within a few years has destroyed the grass so widely and become so much of a pest that in some areas it is doubtful whether it can be eradicated. The area round Port Blair is full of it, but for the moment Little Andaman remains free.

Culturally, the peoples of the Andamans remain today, unlike their kin in Malaysia and the Philippines, at a level almost identical with that of their ancestors thousands of years ago. They represented then, and in great measure represent today, a pure hunting and

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

105 gathering society; it is extremely probable that a study of their daily life today is virtually equivalent to a study of their life as it was in ancient times.

231 241 177 So near are the Andamanese to their original state that they show no signs of ever having had any real agriculture. The Indian Government has tried in vain to induce the surviving Arioto to keep chickens by presenting them with birds and food for them; the gifts were accepted out of politeness, but there the matter ended. Among the remaining Negritos, however, particularly in the Philippines, there are noticeable signs of the awakening of some agricultural sense, even to the extent of some commerce, and regular attendance at markets. But on Little Andaman, for example, I saw in 1952 various ginger trees growing, brought there by some unknown means and at Entigheh there was also a pumpkin. In 1953 and subsequent years there were no pumpkins at all on the island, and although the gingers were still thriving they were clearly doing so by chance, without any attention from the Onges, who ate some of the small red fruit, and seemed to like the piquant flavour, but still showed no signs of wanting to perpetuate it. In several places both on the coast and inland I saw, too, clumps of the slender native bamboo, hardly planted intentionally; the ground sites of some huts now abandoned, like Bugheneh and Odadda, were covered in them. The inhabitants had apparently wanted to procure a supply of material for roofing mats, or the drying platforms used by a few groups, and so the plantations were completely stripped – and killed.

245 177 In order to plant coconut trees for the benefit of the islanders I had even to do the planting myself, so utterly ignorant were they of agricultural methods; we even had to do all the clearing of the undergrowth in a patch of forest, and prepare the ground. The Onges watched curiously but were quite uninterested. Why should they care for a tree for ten years to get its nuts when the island and seas around are teaming with food for the taking?

824 825 In their continual search for food the Onges have acquired botanical and zoological knowledge which seems almost innate, and they know of properties in plants and animals of which we are quite unaware. Nearly every day on Little Andaman I came across examples of this. I only had to draw a rough sketch of an animal and they knew at once where it could be found; it was only thanks

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

178 also acquired more recent additions, so that any primitive ignor-
392 ance on their part of an art so ancient and generally advantageous as that of making fire is hardly credible. One thing is, however, certain: they do not today know how to produce fire.

174 In order to explain their ignorance, one must remember the
178 surprising speed with which primitive peoples forget even essential facts, even details of their own life. They can forget their father's or mother's name, or both, and important events of less than fifty years ago are sometimes forgotten by those who took part in them. Cultural regression following the forgetting of ethnographical facts, even essential facts such as the making of fire, is a phenomenon widespread in every continent. Widely differing elements of culture spread out from a number of centres and were forced to adapt to natural surroundings often incomparably different from the centre from which they spread. Sometimes these cultural migrations led to progress, but more often to regression. Particularly in the marginal areas furthest from the centres of culture, enforced modifications were profound, with ensuing cultural impoverishment. The Andamanese, probably arriving from areas to the east, remain as survivors of a series of disasters both biological and non-biological, in one of the marginal areas which, although a natural paradise, has been most affected by adverse circumstances. It is, therefore, hardly surprising if, like the Eskimos, they no longer reflect the brilliance of the past, either biologically or culturally. A similar situation is to be found in populations much larger and more advanced than the Andamanese.

●105 It is not strictly accurate to define the Onges as primitive; they should more properly be regarded as involuted. They possess certain essentials which almost entitle them to recognition as a civilized people: religious concepts are not unknown, they bury their dead, they are monogamous, and they have their own language. While they are unable to produce fire they can preserve it and know how to use it, they make excellent bows, arrows, harpoons and canoes, and they know how to produce pottery.

Nevertheless, they have no agriculture, and do not keep domestic animals except the dog, introduced only within living memory and to them a faithful friend. They have no idea of the use of metals, and make no stone implements apart from the tiny splinters used for shaving. They have never developed any graphic arts and have

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

only a crude form of body decoration based on geometrical designs.

They are, therefore, to be included among the most backward peoples of mankind, who have remained in a very simple form of social structure. They have never progressed to any elementary organization of themselves into 'clans', or even 'tribes'. They have, in short, the psychological outlook and concepts of other primitive peoples, modified by local conditions. The evidence in favour of the Onges of today being the product of cultural development over a very long period appears to me overwhelming, though their development has already been hindered by involution and, we must presume, a series of setbacks.

The Onges have thus remained culturally isolated and this has deprived them of the opportunities offered to the rest of the world. The time came when they ceased to receive or to elaborate new concepts, and from that point regression was inevitable. There is abundant evidence that their culture dates back to Palaeolithic times, so that they now represent the last and decadent expression of a very lengthy stage of biological and cultural development, a point of arrival, and not one of departure. Everywhere in the Andamans there are signs of an ancient culture which must once have spread over much of the world. It is neither logical nor practical to explain the similarity of many concepts as a series of convergences, all of independent origin; ideas must have spread outwards with the passage of time and the gradual population of habitable areas.

No study of present-day life on the Andamans can be complete without an attempt to build up a valid picture of the islands as they were centuries ago, and this we can do with some accuracy by a study of the kitchen-middens. These abound on Great Andaman, but few have been excavated, and then only briefly reported. Those of Little Andaman have not, for obvious reasons, previously been investigated, but they are of considerable importance for the light they cast on their own development and history, and on that of similar mounds outside the Andamans. It is only on Little Andaman that they are still being built up, continually increasing in size, forming a unique, direct and continuous link with life on the island thousands of years ago.

Provided they have not been damaged – for example by rain or